

In The Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A system for manipulating image data, comprising:
a data source configured to store one or more ancillary data files, said data source being implemented as a computer in a distributed computer network of multiple remote intercommunicating computers;
an imaging device configured to capture said image data, said imaging device being physically remote from said computer; and
an ancillary data module for transferring said one or more ancillary data files in an ancillary data flow from said data source directly to said imaging device for manipulating said image data, said ancillary data module performing on-line management procedures during which a system user interactively and manually utilizes said imaging device to remotely view said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to remotely manipulate said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to then remotely select said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, and to manually trigger a download of said one or more ancillary data files from said computer to said imaging device, said one or more ancillary data files being selected and downloaded through selection decisions that are able to be made in all instances only by said system user, said selection decisions being made in all instances prior to said download of said ancillary data files, said on-line management procedures occurring while an active bi-directional electronic communication path currently exists from said imaging device to said computer through said distributed computer network, said one or more ancillary data files including one or more image data files that said imaging device combines with said image data to create a new composite image that integrates both said image data and at least one of said ancillary data files into a single image.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said data source includes an image station site on an Internet network.
3. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said ancillary data files include an image background file and an Internet webpage file.
4. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein said imaging device includes at least one of a digital still camera device, a video camera device, and an electronic scanner device.
5. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said one or more ancillary data files are transferred from said data source to said imaging device by utilizing a wireless transmission process.
6. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein said ancillary data module manipulates said image data by combining selected ones of said ancillary data files with said image data to generate new composite data.
7. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said imaging device includes a capture subsystem and a control module, said control module having a central processing unit, a memory, a viewfinder, and one or more input/output interfaces.
8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein said memory includes an application software program, an operating system, said ancillary data module, said one or more ancillary data files, a display manager, data storage for storing said image data, and one or more camera menus for display upon said viewfinder.

9. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein said one or more input/output interfaces include a distributed electronic network interface, a host computer interface, a printer interface, a wireless communications interface, a user interface, and a removable storage media interface.

10. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said ancillary data module includes a download manager for transferring said ancillary data files from said data source to said imaging device and analyzing said ancillary data files, an editing module for combining said one or more ancillary data files with said image data, a data manager for controlling and reorganizing said one or more ancillary data files, and miscellaneous routines that include a conversion routine for translating said one or more ancillary data files into a compatible format.

11. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein said one or more ancillary data files each include a data portion and a corresponding descriptor tag that is analyzed by said ancillary data module to identify, characterize, and categorize a corresponding one of said one or more ancillary data files.

12. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said one or more ancillary data files are alternately created both by a system user on a local computer device and a system manufacturer utilizing ancillary-data production equipment.

13. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein said data source is configured to facilitate interactively accessing, manipulating, and downloading said one or more ancillary data files to said imaging device by a system user.

14. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said imaging device establishes said active bi-directional electronic communication path to said data source, said active communication path alternately being established by both an automatic connection protocol and a user-initiated connection protocol.

15. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 14 wherein said ancillary data module performs said one or more on-line management procedures while said active bi-directional electronic communication path is available, said one or more on-line management procedures including a data-source content review and an ancillary-data file download procedure.

16. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein said ancillary data module downloads a special instruction file that corresponds to a selected ancillary data file, said special instruction file including information that instructs said imaging device how to correctly utilize said selected ancillary data file, said special instruction file being alternately formatted both as an embedded instruction file that is embedded in said selected ancillary data file and a discrete instruction file that is not embedded in said selected ancillary data file.

17. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein said imaging device terminates said active bi-directional electronic communication path to said data source when said on-line management procedures have been completed, said active communication path being alternately terminated by both an automatic termination protocol and a user-initiated termination protocol.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17 wherein said ancillary data module performs an off-line management procedure for said one or more ancillary data files that have been downloaded from said data source, said off-line management procedure including a file descriptor identification procedure by which said ancillary data module categorizes said one or more ancillary data files, said imaging device responsively updating camera menus to include said one or more ancillary data files to thereby enable a system user to utilize said one or more ancillary data files.
19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18 wherein said off-line management procedure includes a file reorganization procedure and a file deletion procedure.
20. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18 wherein said imaging device utilizes an editing module from said ancillary data module to combine selected ones of said one or more ancillary data files with one or more images from said image data to thereby create said new composite image.

21. (Previously Presented) A method for manipulating image data, comprising the steps of:

storing one or more ancillary data files in a data source, said data source being implemented as a computer in a distributed computer network of multiple remote intercommunicating computers;

capturing said image data with an imaging device, said imaging device being physically remote from said computer;

transferring said one or more ancillary data files in an ancillary data flow from said data source directly to said imaging device by using an ancillary data module; and

manipulating said image data with said one or more ancillary data files, said ancillary data module performing on-line management procedures during which a system user interactively and manually utilizes said imaging device to remotely view said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to remotely manipulate said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to then remotely select said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, and to manually trigger a download of said one or more ancillary data files from said computer to said imaging device, said one or more ancillary data files being selected and downloaded through selection decisions made only by said system user, said selection decisions being made prior to said download of said ancillary data files, said on-line management procedures occurring while an active bi-directional electronic communication path currently exists from said imaging device to said computer through said distributed computer network, said one or more ancillary data files including one or more image data files that said imaging device combines with said image data to create a new composite image that integrates both said image data and at least one of said ancillary data files into a single image.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said data source includes an image station site on an Internet network.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data files include an image background file and an Internet webpage file.

24. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein said imaging device includes at least one of a digital still camera device, a video camera device, and an electronic scanner device.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more ancillary data files are transferred from said data source to said imaging device by utilizing a wireless transmission process.

26. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data module manipulates said image data by combining selected ones of said ancillary data files with said image data to generate new composite data.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said imaging device includes a capture subsystem and a control module, said control module having a central processing unit, a memory, a viewfinder, and one or more input/output interfaces.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein said memory includes an application software program, an operating system, said ancillary data module, said one or more ancillary data files, a display manager, data storage for storing said image data, and one or more camera menus for display upon said viewfinder.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein said one or more input/output interfaces include a distributed electronic network interface, a host computer interface, a printer interface, a wireless communications interface, a user interface, and a removable storage media interface.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data module includes a download manager for transferring said ancillary data files from said data source to said imaging device and analyzing said ancillary data files, an editing module for combining said one or more ancillary data files with said image data, a data manager for controlling and reorganizing said one or more ancillary data files, and miscellaneous routines that include a conversion routine for translating said one or more ancillary data files into a compatible format.

31. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more ancillary data files each include a data portion and a corresponding descriptor tag that is analyzed by said ancillary data module to identify, characterize, and categorize a corresponding one of said one or more ancillary data files.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more ancillary data files are alternately created by both a system user on a local computer device and a system manufacturer utilizing ancillary-data production equipment.

33. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein said data source is configured to facilitate interactively accessing, manipulating, and downloading said one or more ancillary data files to said imaging device by a system user.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said imaging device establishes said active bi-directional electronic communication path to said data source, said active communication path being alternately established by both an automatic connection protocol and a user-initiated connection protocol.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 34 wherein said ancillary data module performs said one or more on-line management procedures while said active bi-directional electronic communication path is available, said one or more on-line management procedures including a data-source content review and an ancillary-data file download procedure.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said ancillary data module downloads a special instruction file that corresponds to a selected ancillary data file, said special instruction file including information that instructs said imaging device how to correctly utilize said selected ancillary data file, said special instruction file being alternately formatted as both an embedded instruction file that is embedded in said selected ancillary data file and a discrete instruction file that is not embedded in said selected ancillary data file.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said imaging device terminates said active bi-directional electronic communication path to said data source when said on-line management procedures have been completed, said active communication path being alternately terminated by both an automatic termination protocol and a user-initiated termination protocol.

38. (Original) The method of claim 37 wherein said ancillary data module performs an off-line management procedure for said one or more ancillary data files that have been downloaded from said data source, said off-line management procedure including a file descriptor identification procedure by which said ancillary data module categorizes said one or more ancillary data files, said imaging device responsively updating camera menus to include said one or more ancillary data files to thereby enable a system user to utilize said one or more ancillary data files.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein said off-line management procedure includes a file reorganization procedure and a file deletion procedure.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein said imaging device utilizes an editing module from said ancillary data module to combine selected ones of said one or more ancillary data files with one or more images from said image data to thereby create said new composite image.

41. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium comprising program instructions for manipulating image data by performing the steps of:

storing one or more ancillary data files in a data source, said data source being implemented as a computer in a distributed computer network of multiple remote intercommunicating computers;

capturing said image data with an imaging device, said imaging device being physically remote from said computer;

transferring said one or more ancillary data files in an ancillary data flow from said data source directly to said imaging device by using an ancillary data module; and

manipulating said image data with said one or more ancillary data files, said ancillary data module performing on-line management procedures during which a system user interactively and manually utilizes said imaging device to remotely view said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to remotely manipulate said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, to then remotely select said one or more ancillary data files that are stored on said computer, and to manually trigger a download of said one or more ancillary data files from said computer to said imaging device, said one or more ancillary data files being selected and downloaded through selection decisions made only by said system user, said selection decisions being made prior to said download of said ancillary data files, said on-line management procedures occurring while an active bi-directional electronic communication path currently exists from said imaging device to said computer through said distributed computer network, said one or more ancillary data files including one or more image data files that said imaging device combines with said image data to create a new composite image that integrates both said image data and at least one of said ancillary data files into a single image.

42. (Original) A system for manipulating image data, comprising:
means for storing one or more ancillary data files;
means for capturing said image data;
means for transferring said one or more ancillary data files from said
means for storing to said means for capturing; and
means for manipulating said image data with said one or more ancillary
data files.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein a data manager
from said ancillary data module deletes a local ancillary data file in said imaging
device after detecting a file type of a newly-downloaded one of said ancillary data
files.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data
files include a text overlay file for superimposing upon said image data, a
background file of visual background data for combining with said image data,
special program instructions that directly enable or instruct said image device how
to utilize said ancillary data files, and template files that are utilized as settings or
frameworks for combining with said image data, said template files including an
image transition file, a still template file, an animated template file, and a voice-
annotated template file.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31 wherein said descriptor tag
includes a data format, a data type, a data structure, and a data size.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31 wherein said ancillary data module analyzes said descriptor tag corresponding to a downloaded one of said ancillary data files, said ancillary data module responsively assigning said downloaded one of said ancillary data files to one of several file categories in said imaging device, said file categories including a template category, an overlay category, a background category, an Internet web page category, and an instructions category.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data module performs an off-line management procedure for said one or more ancillary data files that have been downloaded from said data source, said off-line management procedure including said ancillary data module analyzing descriptors from said ancillary data files and coordinating corresponding off-line file management procedures by alternately utilizing both an automatic process and an interactive process with a system user, said off-line file management procedures including a file descriptor identification procedure by which said ancillary data module categorizes said one or more ancillary data files, said imaging device responsively updating camera menus to include said one or more ancillary data files to thereby enable a system user to utilize said one or more ancillary data files.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said on-line management procedures only occur while said imaging device is in an on-line state that permits bi-directionally communicating through said distributed computer network directly to said computer.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 48 wherein said distributed computer network is implemented as an Internet network.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said system user utilizes said ancillary data module to locally view displayed images of said ancillary data files during said on-line management procedures.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary module automatically selects certain ones of said one or more ancillary data files without intervention by said system user.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data module is implemented only as a software program stored in a local main memory of said imaging device, said ancillary data module being executed by a sole central-processing unit of said imaging device to perform said on-line management procedures and off-line management procedures.

53. (Previously Presented) A system for manipulating image data, comprising:
a data source configured to store one or more ancillary data files, said data
source being implemented as a computer in an Internet network of
multiple remote intercommunicating computers;
an imaging device configured to capture said image data, said imaging
device being physically remote from said computer; and
an ancillary data module for transferring said one or more ancillary data
files in an ancillary data flow from said data source directly to said
imaging device for manipulating said image data, said ancillary data
module performing on-line management procedures during which a
system user interactively and manually utilizes said imaging device
to remotely view said one or more ancillary data files while said one or
more ancillary data files are stored on said computer, to remotely
manipulate said one or more ancillary data files while said one or
more ancillary data files are stored on said computer, to then
remotely select said one or more ancillary data files while said one or
more ancillary data files are stored on said computer, and to
manually trigger a download of said one or more ancillary data files
from said computer to said imaging device, said one or more
ancillary data files being selected and downloaded through selection
decisions made only by said system user, said selection decisions
being made prior to said download of said ancillary data files, said
on-line management procedures occurring while an active bi-
directional electronic communication path currently exists from said
imaging device through said Internet network to said computer, said
one or more ancillary data files being limited to one or more image
data files that said imaging device combines with said image data to
create a new composite image that integrates both said image data
and at least one of said ancillary data files into a single image.

54. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 53 wherein said ancillary data module is implemented as software on said imaging device, said ancillary data module controlling said on-line management procedures.

55. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein said ancillary data module also controls off-line management procedures for said one or more ancillary data files that have been downloaded from said data source, said off-line management procedures including said ancillary data module analyzing descriptors from said ancillary data files and coordinating corresponding off-line file management procedures by alternately utilizing both an automatic process and an interactive process with a system user, said off-line file management procedures including a file descriptor identification procedure by which said ancillary data module categorizes said one or more ancillary data files, said imaging device responsively updating camera menus to include said one or more ancillary data files to thereby enable a system user to utilize said one or more ancillary data files.

56. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 53 wherein said imaging device is implemented as a video camera device.

57. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 53 wherein said imaging device communicates with said data source through a hard-wired physical connection.

58. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 53 wherein said imaging device communicates with said data source through a removable storage device.

59. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21 wherein said ancillary data files include a text overlay file for superimposing upon said image data, a background file of visual background data for combining with said image data, special program instructions that directly enable or instruct said image device how to utilize said ancillary data files, and template files that are utilized as settings or frameworks for combining with said image data, said template files including an image transition file, a still template file, an animated template file, and a voice-annotated template file.